



GAZEBO EXPRESS

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENT SOURCE FOR THE TOWN OF HIGHLAND • OCTOBER 2010

BALANCING THE BUDGET

TOWN COUNCIL TO CUT ANOTHER \$50,000 FROM 2011 FISCAL PLAN

Across-the-board cuts are bringing the town closer to balancing the budget for 2011.

Town Council President Mark Herak said the council wants to shave another \$50,000 from next year's fiscal plan in order to spend only what is raised next year.

"I'm not promising that we won't be forced to go to our reserves to pay our bills," Herak said. "But we hope we won't have to dip into our savings next year."

Highland is unique among its neighbors in keeping its fiscal head above water despite a state mandate that has limited the amount of money the town may raise in property taxes.

"Other communities have been forced to cut personnel and services. We've been fortunate enough to not have to travel that road," Councilman Dan Vassar said. "Unfortunately, if this freeze continues, we are

2011 BUDGET HEARINGS


A public hearing on the 2011 budget will be held at 7 p.m. Oct. 18 at the Town Hall, 3333 Ridge Road. The council will vote on the budget at 7 p.m. Oct. 29.

Estimated budget **\$15,300,772**

Total to be raised through property taxes **\$12,771,974**

going to be forced to make increasingly difficult decisions regarding our workforce and select services to our citizens."

Councilman Brian Novak said the council is always looking to be as efficient as possible, consolidating services and cross-training employees in order to save money.

"We have given the department heads discretion to cut their budgets by 4.5 percent and we know they are doing the best they can. Eventually, that isn't going to be enough." 

COUNCIL WAIVES BUSINESS PENALTIES


The Town Council has granted a one-time amnesty to all business owners who have yet to pay their 2010 licensing fee.

The amnesty applies only to businesses that pay the annual fee by Oct. 29. Those who do not comply by the deadline will be assessed a \$50 fee — \$25 for the license and another \$25 in penalties.

Council members decided to take the unusual step after several dozen business owners appealed notices that stipulated they were late in paying the licensing fee. The fees are due each year prior to March 1.

"This is not a new license, but there seemed to be a problem from the business owners' perspective this year," Council President Mark Herak said. "Our goal is to have every business in town licensed. The penalty was included to help that happen."

"We're hopeful the grace period we are extending will encourage every business owner to get their license for 2010 and pay before the deadline going forward."

Anyone with questions about the business license should contact the Clerk-Treasurer's office at (219) 838-1080. 

LED LIGHTS ON TRIAL: WHAT DO YOU THINK?

A halo of bluish white light has temporarily replaced some of the yellow street lights near Town Hall.

Three street lights in the 3300 block of Ridge Road have been replaced with their LED counterparts.

"These light bulbs use one-tenth of the electricity as traditional street lights," Council President Mark Herak said. "If they work as well as traditional light bulbs, we may be able to replace all of the street lights in town — saving money and the environment."

FEEDBACK: The Town Council wants to know what you think. Take a ride along Ridge Road after dark just west of Grace Street. Then, let the folks at Town Hall know what you think by calling (219) 838-1080.

STATE NAMES HIGHLAND TO MAIN STREET PROGRAM

Highland has been designated a Main Street Community, entitling the town to state Downtown Enhancement Grants and other programs that could further improve the Highway Avenue corridor.

Redevelopment Director Cecile Petro said the Main Street designation must be in place for one year before the town will be eligible to apply for facade improvement grants.

Petro said the Redevelopment Commission is looking for residents and business owners who would like to be part of the town's Main Street Commission.

INFO: Applications are available online at www.highland.in.gov or at Town Hall, 3333 Ridge Road.

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER

The Town Council and School Board are working together to ensure there is a Resource Officer assigned to the Highland schools.

The town plans to pay 51 percent of the \$126,204 of the salary and benefits while the School Town will pay 49 percent of the annual cost. Total cost to the schools is \$61,840.15 with the town paying \$63,076.95 toward the officer's salary and benefits. Both bodies need to approve the agreement before it is final.

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NEWS TIP? STORY IDEA?

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TOWN COOKING UP FUN FOR FIRST CABBAGE FEST

Highland's first festival dedicated to cabbage is shaping up to be a true hometown celebration.

Since word began circulating about a recipe contest at the fest — the only requirements are that the recipe contains cabbage and you hail from Highland — Kim Kosmas said calls have been pouring in from those interested in the contest and in the festival itself.

"There are many people who have cabbage recipes that have been handed down from grandparents, recipes that have been in families for generations. We are excited that so many people want to participate."

To enter a recipe in this year's contest, simply cook up your family's favorite recipe and bring it to the festival where it will be judged on originality, creativity and taste!

Other events planned for the weekend will also involve local talent, including a magic show and an open mic night. Kosmas said she has heard from many residents who plan on participating as singers or by playing a musical instrument.

The fest will also feature carnival rides and a host of food and craft vendors.

CABBAGE FEST SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, OCT. 15

WHEN: 4 p.m. to midnight at Main Square Park

CARNIVAL RIDES: \$20 bracelets — 4 to 9 p.m. Individual tickets are available.

ENTERTAINMENT: Highland's Got Talent Night! from 6 to 8 p.m. Raffle tickets available.

SATURDAY, OCT. 16

WHEN: Noon to midnight at Main Square Park

CARNIVAL RIDES: \$20 bracelets — noon to 4 p.m. Individual tickets are available.

ENTERTAINMENT: Highland High School Orchestra and Band performance at 5 p.m. Laser Light Show after sunset.

RECIPE CONTEST: Bring dishes at 5 p.m. to the community table for judging.

SUNDAY, OCT. 17 — FAMILY DAY

WHEN: Noon to 10 p.m. at Main Square Park

CARNIVAL RIDES: Bracelets available for \$20 from noon to 4 p.m. and \$15 from 6 to 9 p.m.

ENTERTAINMENT: Magic show from 2 to 3 p.m. Face painting. Open mic.

CABBAGE FEST COUPON

Bring the coupon inside this month's water bill to the organizing committee table. The first 3,000 residents who present a coupon will receive a Cabbage Fest keepsake.

METER REPLACEMENTS ON SCHEDULE

With three months remaining in the year, the town has nearly completed its goal to have all water meters replaced before 2011.

The replacements are part of a Water Department program to install all-new, remote-read meters at every location in town. Of the 9,200 locations, only about 150 remained unchanged at the end of September.

The Town Council passed a law Sept. 20 that will increase the monthly charges for water usage by about \$28 per month for anyone who does not have their meter changed by the end of the year.

Public Works Director John Bach hopes to have 100 percent compliance on the new meters by the end of December, the target date for completion set by the Water Board.

Bach said the old system would take five meter readers a total of 85 work days per month to get the job done.

The new meters make it possible to canvas the entire town in a single work day each month, collecting data that is used to generate monthly water bills.

"The new meters make it possible for one person with the proper equipment to drive each street in town and read the meter electronically using a dedicated radio frequency," Bach said.

The price of the program has been about \$1.84 million. That initial cost will be offset over a period of years through savings that will result by reducing the number of employees it takes to do the job.

PRIME REAL ESTATE

ABANDONED DEALERSHIPS OUTRAGE COUNCIL; TOWN WANTS PROPERTIES PROFITABLE AGAIN

Ten acres of land on two parcels located on some of the best real estate in Highland has gone untapped for more than five years.

The land — located along Indianapolis Boulevard and 45th Avenue about a mile from the bustling Highland Grove Mall — once housed the Terry Shaver and Abrahamson auto dealerships that were shuttered long before the economy meltdown two years ago.

They continue to remain abandoned — not for a lack of interest but because of vagaries and pricing that is apparently high in the current market.

It has members of the Town Council outraged and looking for options to change what has been the status quo.


"I think it is absolutely horrible for the town — that these buildings and properties have been left vacant," Councilman Bernie Zemen said. "I think we should give the owners of any property one year to divest of

vacant properties. If they aren't able to sell it in that amount of time, we should be able to buy it at fair market value."

Councilman Dan Vassar said he believes that the owners, who prospered for years because they were located in Highland, should return the favor.

"I, for one, am tired of looking at these vacant properties," he said. "The current owners need to consider what is best for the town and be reasonable when potential buyers come to them with an offer."

Redevelopment Director Cecile Petro said it has been frustrating trying to move the properties back to profitability.

"We have the information that we have been given listed on a state web site that is available to potential developers," Petro said. "There is nothing we want more than to return these buildings to profitable business ventures. It will be good for the town and its commercial base." 

HIGHLAND GROVE TRAFFIC FIX ON TAP

A project to improve traffic safety at Highland Grove Mall — which has been on again/off again while town leaders looked for ways to finance the project — is back on.

Police Chief Pete Hojnicky said retailers have stepped up to assist in financing the installation of concrete medians that will direct traffic exiting south of the mall toward Indianapolis Boulevard.

The exit closest to the Target store has been an area of concern for nearly a decade. Between 2003 and 2009, 39 accidents were logged at the location, nearly all involving drivers attempting to turn left from the mall to go east. Visibility along the busy thoroughfare is compromised by a raised railroad crossing 500 feet east of the exit.


In 2007, it was believed that a solution had been found. The then-developer of a planned upscale retail development in Schererville immediately south of Highland

Grove had committed to installing a traffic signal at the location. That development was abandoned and with it hope for a permanent traffic safety fix.

Earlier this year, the town attempted to make the area safer by banning left turns from the mall onto Main Street. When that proved ineffective, the town put out orange barrels to funnel traffic west instead of east.

Hojnicky said he was pleased to hear from retail managers, who want to assist in making the area safer.

"Target came to us and wants to get this done yet this fall before the holiday shopping season begins," Hojnicky said.

"We have put the item on the agenda for the October Traffic Safety Commission. Hopefully, we can move forward and get this project done. The only thing that has stopped us, so far, is a lack of funds to get it done." 

FALL CLEANUP DAY

Republic Waste Service will schedule extra crews for collecting extra trash and rubbish Oct. 12 because of fall cleaning. This is not a hazardous waste collection.

INFO: Please call public works at (219) 972-5069.

VETERAN VIP TREATMENT

As a way to honor those who have served our country, the School Town has launched a program that allows all current and former Highland residents who are serving or who have served in the military a special pass that provides free admission to events at the schools.

The military pass will grant complimentary admission to home athletic events, choral concerts, musical programs, band concerts, fun fairs, art shows and drama productions.

INFO: To obtain your pass, please visit the School Town of Highland Administration Building located at 9145 Kennedy Avenue and present documentation that shows current or prior military service.

NEW RULES AND FINES

The Town Council has passed a bevy of new rules and upgraded fines for:

- Violating the town noise ordinance;
- Abandoned and junk vehicles;
- General offenses, such as curfew violation and skateboarding; and,
- Animal Violations.

The new rules were enacted following a request from Police Chief Pete Hojnicky and the Public Safety Committee. Hojnicky said the rules and fines have been designed to protect the health and safety of all residents and their pets.

FINAL MARKET DAY

From fruits and vegetables to homemade crafts, it's your last chance to catch the weekly street market from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Oct. 9 at Main Square Park.

HALLOWEEN SCENE

CENTENNIAL SCARECROW CONTEST

Build and vote for your favorite and enjoy the pop art display of creative scarecrows in downtown Highland. Cost to enter is \$10.

WHEN: Oct. 16-30

WHERE: Downtown Highland

INFO: Entry forms are available at Town Hall or www.highland.in.gov/100.

TRI-KAPPA BOO BLAST

Join us for a costume-filled afternoon of games, storytelling, snacks and more for all kids 10 and under. Then that evening, a Boo Blast dance will feature a costume contest, games and snacks for all 5th- and 6th-grade Highland and Munster students.

WHEN: 3 to 5 p.m. **Oct. 23**; dance from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

WHERE: Lincoln Center

INFO: Tickets can be purchased at the door or in advance at the Lincoln Center or through Tri Kappa members. Call Bridget at (219) 322-7746 or tkachfamily@comcast.net.

KIWANIS JACK-O'-LANTERN FESTIVAL

Bring your best carved pumpkin to the Main Square Gazebo along with a \$2 entry fee for the Kiwanis annual salute to autumn. Vote for your favorite pumpkin. Bring the family for some gold old fashioned Halloween fun. Proceeds benefit Riley Children's Hospital.

WHEN: 5 to 8 p.m. **Oct. 29-30**

WHERE: Main Square Park Gazebo

INFO: Call Jeannine at (219) 923-2360 or highlandkiwanis@yahoo.com.

CHAMBER JACK-O'-LANTERN JOG

Register to run or trick-or-treat walk with the whole family — even your pets!

WHEN: 10 a.m. **Oct. 30**

WHERE: Main Square Park

INFO: www.signmeup.com/71941

TRICK-OR-TREAT HOURS

WHEN: 5 to 7 p.m. **Oct. 31**

BIDDY BOWLING

Join us for a game of bumper bowling. Participants must be age 4 to 11.

WHEN: 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Saturdays, **Oct. 9 through Nov. 6**

WHERE: Plaza Lanes, 8101 Kennedy Avenue

FEE: \$35 residents; \$38 non-residents

INFO: Call (219) 838-0114 or visit www.highlandparks.org

FALL FLEA MARKET

Do you like getting a bargain? Do you enjoy shopping for rare items such as comic books, sports cards, Hot Wheels, autographed memorabilia and many other collectibles? Roger Parker from P & P Collectibles will be promoting the card show in conjunction with the Lincoln Center Indoor Flea Market. Flea market vendors will be selling household items, toys, books, and more!

WHEN: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. **Oct. 16**

WHERE: Lincoln Center

INFO: Call (219) 838-0114 or visit www.highlandparks.org

YOUTH BASKETBALL

Boys and girls will have fun while learning the basics of basketball. Each team, coached by a parent or volunteer, will play a 10-game season. Teams will be determined by a player draft with the coaches. All players get a T-shirt.

REGISTRATION: Deadline is **Oct. 24**.

FEE: \$45

PRACTICE: Begins the week of Nov. 8; days/times determined by coaches

GAMES: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays, Dec. 4 through Feb. 19.

DIVISIONS: 1st and 2nd Grade • 3rd and 4th Grade • 5th and 6th Grade.

INFO: Call (219) 838-0114 or visit www.highlandparks.org

FALL COMMUNITY CONCERT

Join us for a fall community band concert featuring your Highland neighbors and friends playing some of your favorite tunes.

WHEN: 7 to 8:30 p.m. **Oct. 27**

WHERE: Monbeck Auditorium at Highland High School

ADMISSION: Free

INFO: Call (219) 838-0114 or visit www.highlandparks.org